

Licensed Therapist Shares Tips For Coping In Wake Of Coronavirus Pandemic

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Mayor Eric Garcetti and therapist Michelle Cauley took time Tuesday during the mayor's daily coronavirus briefing to talk about mental health and the importance of checking in with friends and family members in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

LOS ANGELES (CBSLA) — Mayor Eric Garcetti put mental health front and center in his Tuesday evening briefing on the city's coronavirus response, sharing the stage with licensed therapist Michelle Cauley.

“The psychological burden of this pandemic is weighing on all of us, and I always get together and just talk about the stats that you need to know, the programs that we're launching, but I want us to also focus on our mental health, because this is tough,” Garcetti said. “We're carrying pain, we're scared, we cry, we get angry, but there's also a lot of bright moments where we find the connections and the way to get through this.”

Garcetti said that more than 50% of people reaching out to the crisis text line have turned to therapy and mental health services more than they usually do, and Cauley said that the sudden interruption to normal daily life and job losses have created unprecedented stress among Angelenos, young and old alike.

Cauley said that adults should be aware of symptoms of depression, including appetite changes, changes in sleep patterns, sadness, agitation, and loss of pleasure from things they used to enjoy.

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In children, Cauley said that depression can present itself as a sense of sadness or even hopelessness, boredom or low energy and irritability.

“Sometimes we know when our children feel irritable,” she said. “You might ask, ‘What's wrong with you,’ but remember, this can be a symptom of [depression].”

In terms of anxiety, Cauley said internal symptoms could be constant worry, trouble concentrating, feeling tired or always anticipating the worst. External symptoms can mimic cardiac arrest, upset stomach, headaches, tension or insomnia. For children, anxiety can manifest as unrealistic worry about events, being really self-conscious or needing constant reassurance.

And, **Cauley** said, the first step to handling anxiety and depression for both adults and children is recognizing and acknowledging what's happening.

“What I mean by that is giving ourselves space to be able to really openly talk about that,” she said. “Unpack those feelings of what it means and hopefully that will give either you or your child clarity around it.”

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Cauley said that communication is key, whether it was with a friend, family member or mental health professional to find support in a time of uncertainty.

“There is no substitute for communication,” she said. “So just literally opening your mouth and communicating, being able to articulate your feelings.”

Along with getting exercising, eating well, making a plan to handle issues that cause stress such as finances, **Cauley** said that making lists can be helpful.

“This is not forever, do not despair,” Garcetti said. “There are signs of light, and we will get there because you continue to stay healthy, to stay safe and to stay home. All strength and all love to Los Angeles.”

Los Angeles County's Department of Mental Health has a 24-hour access center that can be reached by calling 1-800-854-7771.

Los Angeles Unified School District also offers a hotline for students and families that can be reached by calling 213-241-3840 on weekdays between 6 a.m.-6 p.m.

People can also text HOME to 741-741 to be connected with a crisis counselor at the Crisis Text Line.

For those struggling with mental health issues, a [list of resources can be found on the city's website](#).